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PREFACE.

The present volume affords practical proof—if such were needed—of the value of the information to be found in our "Notes and Queries." Such a subject as the well-known and familiar perching of Starlings on the backs of Sheep would strike most of us as a tale that was told and required no repetition, but Mr. Stubbs has raised questions thereon which deal with locality of occurrence and race of the species which follows that habit (?). Other contributors have also made original suggestions, such as to the breed of Sheep thus frequented by the Starling (?), and also as to the object and consequences of the practice (?). With such an experience, who can undervalue the ultimate importance of observations which on their face value often appear trivial and trite? Our pages for 1912 also contain papers and notes on most branches of zoology; perhaps, however, British Mammals have found fewer observers and recorders. If the "proper study of mankind is man," we still receive no notes on the genus *Homo*, nor records of finds of his ancient weapons or utensils, nor details of discovery of early burials. These subjects are not outside the purview of 'The Zoologist.' Neither is general palæontology—especially so far as Britain is concerned—foreign to our pages.

Perhaps nothing in the editorial range of duties is more painful than that of annually recording those who have fallen from our ranks, some being personal friends, at least all well known as naturalists. This year three valued contributors

to these pages have passed away: E. A. Fitch, W. F. Kirby, and R. W. C. Shelford. From the ornithological circle, A. O. Hume, J. G. Keulemans, and W. B. Tegetmeier are now absent.

In the literature of 1912 several additions to our British faunistic publications have appeared. Mr. Hugh S. Gladstone has given us 'A Catalogue of the Vertebrate Fauna of Dumfriesshire.' The two volumes on 'Studies in Bird Migration,' by William Eagle Clark, may be said to have more than brought that subject to date. The 'Hand-list of British Birds,' by Messrs. Hartert, Jourdain, Ticehurst, and Witherby, is a publication that denotes a future nomenclature. Mr. G. Bolam has published his welcome 'Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders.' In British entomology we have had two good volumes—'British Plant-galls,' by E. W. Swanton, and the 'Humble-bee,' &c., with descriptions of all the British species of *Bombus* and *Psithyrus*. Major Barrett-Hamilton's 'History of British Mammals,' and Mr. Kirkman's 'British Bird Book' still continue to appear regularly in their now well-known sectional parts; while at the very end of 1911 Mr. Claude Morley published his fourth volume of 'Ichneumonologia Britannica.'

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